

Department of State

§ 171.24

protection. If so, the Department shall promptly make such information available to the requester, unless withholding it is otherwise warranted under applicable law.

(c) When the Department receives a request for information in a document which is in its custody, but which was classified by another agency, it shall refer the request to the appropriate agency for review. The Department shall also notify the requester of the referral unless the association of the reviewing agency with the information requires protection in the interest of national security. The reviewing agency shall respond directly to the requester and shall notify the Department of its determination.

(d) During the transition period allowed by Executive Order 12065 from declassification at 30 years to declassification at 20 years, all requests for classified United States Government originated information over 30 years old not previously declassified and transferred to the Archives will be processed according to paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(e) In response to a request for a classified document in its possession, the Department may not refuse to confirm the existence or non-existence of the document unless the fact of its existence or non-existence would itself be classifiable.

(f) In the case of requests for documents containing foreign government information, the Department, if it is also the agency which initially received the foreign government information, shall determine whether the foreign government information in the document may be declassified and released in accordance with policies or guidelines, consulting with other interested agencies as necessary. If the Department is not the agency which received the foreign government information, it shall refer the request to the original receiving agency, which shall take action on the request.

(g) In considering requests for mandatory review, the Department may decline to review again any request for material which has been reviewed within one year and denied, except as the request constitutes an appeal under subpart G of this subchapter.

§ 171.23 Determination in disputed cases.

(a) Information that continues to meet the legal requirements for classification under section 1-3 of the Order at the time of review for declassification is presumed to require continued protection and may be withheld from disclosure under the Order and section (b)(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. However, as stated in section 3-303 of the Order, it is government policy to consider the public interest in disclosure when information is reviewed for declassification. In some cases, the need to protect information that continues to meet the requirements of classification may be outweighed by the public interest in disclosure of information. When such a question arises, the authority reviewing the information shall refer the question to the relevant Top Secret authority in the Department of State to make a policy determination whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the damage to the national security that might reasonably be expected from the disclosure. In making such determination, that authority shall respect the intent of the Order to protect foreign government information and confidential foreign sources. That authority shall also consult with other officials in the agency as the circumstances warrant.

(b) In the Department of State, if such a case is appealed by the requester of the information after receiving a notice of denial, the case shall be referred to the Appeals Review Panels in accordance with the Department's appeal procedures. If the Panel should decide that the case raises a question as to whether the need to protect information that continues to meet the requirements of classification is outweighed by the public interest in disclosure, the question shall be referred to a principal officer for determination.

§ 171.24 Challenges to classification.

(a) A government employee, who has reasonable cause to believe that a document is classified unnecessarily, improperly, or for an inappropriate period of time, is encouraged to and shall

have the right to challenge such classification.

(b) The challenger shall prepare a statement giving the reasons to support such a challenge, and may submit a request to the office or bureau of origin for a review of the document under the mandatory declassification procedures of the agency, expect that the agency shall reach a determination in 30 days instead of 60 days. If the reviewing office or bureau agrees with the challenger, rectifying changes shall be made on the face of the document. The office of the record holder and other holders should be notified of the changes to the extent practicable. If the reviewing office disagrees with the challenger, the challenger may appeal within 60 days to the Chairman of the Appeals Review Panels, who shall obtain a decision from one of the Panels, within 30 days of receipt of the appeal.

(c) If the challenger wishes to remain anonymous, an officer designated by the chairman of the Appeals Review Panels shall act as the challenger's agent.

§ 171.25 Former Presidential appointees.

(a) Former Presidential appointees may have access to those documents (classified and unclassified) they originated, reviewed, or signed only while serving as Presidential appointees. Requests should be submitted in writing to the Information and Privacy Coordinator and should include a general description of the records and the time period covered by the request. Access shall be granted under the following conditions:

(1) The Department must first determine that granting access to the requested material is consistent with the interests of national security;

(2) The former Presidential appointee must agree in writing to safeguard the information from unauthorized disclosure;

(3) The former Presidential appointee must submit a statement authorizing the Department to review any notes and manuscripts to determine that they contain no classified information;

(4) The information may not be further disseminated without the express permission of the Department;

(5) If the former Presidential appointee uses a research assistant, this person must also meet all of the above conditions. Such a personal assistant must be working for the former Presidential appointee and not gathering information for publication on her or his own.

(b) If the access requested by former Presidential appointees requires services for which fair and equitable fees may be charged pursuant to title 5 of the Independent Offices Appropriations Act, 65 Stat. 290, 31 U.S.C. 483a (1976), the requester shall be so notified and the fees may be charged pursuant to that Act; the requester shall be so notified and the fees may be imposed.

§ 171.26 Exemptions.

(a) Information less than 10 years old which was originated by the President, by the White House staff, or by committees or commissions appointed by the President, or by other action on behalf of the President, is exempted from mandatory review for declassification. Requests for mandatory review of information more than 10 years old of the origin described shall be processed in accordance with procedures developed by the Archivist of the United States. These procedures will provide for consultation with agencies having primary subject matter interest, who will provide the Archivist their recommendations as to the disposition of the request. Any decision by the Archivist may be appealed to the Director of the Information Security Oversight Office. Agencies with primary subject matter interest will be notified promptly of the Director's decision on such appeals and may further appeal to the National Security Council. The information shall remain classified until the appeal is decided or until one year from the date of the Director's decision, whichever comes first.

(b) The Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts exemptions and any other exemptions under applicable law may be invoked by the Department to deny material on grounds other than classification.